(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) praised passage of the Financial Services appropriations bill yesterday in the U.S. House of Representatives for including specific provisions on security and economic development for communities along the border. The FY 2008 Financial Services-General Government Appropriations bill provides $21.4 billion in discretionary spending passed by 240 to 179.

Specifically within the Financial Services Appropriations bill, Congressman Rodriguez worked with El Paso Congressman Silvestre Reyes to secure **$4.29 million for the Tornillo-Guadalupe International Bridge**. These funds will be used to construct a federal border inspection station used by U.S. Customs and Border Protection on a new six-lane international bridge in Tornillo, TX, which replaces the existing obsolete single lane bridge.

&quot;Throughout my Southwest Texas border District - from San Antonio to Big Bend to Tornillo - I have found many communities in need of investments in their infrastructure and stimuli for small business development,&quot; said Congressman Rodriguez. &quot;That is why, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I strongly support the Financial Services Appropriations bill and its key provisions for small businesses and border infrastructure that are important to communities across the district. I worked hard to secure funds for the Tornillo-Guadalupe International Bridge because it will bring international trade and economic expansion throughout the entire West Texas border region.&quot;

FY 2008 Financial Services-General Government Appropriations bill provides $21.4 billion in discretionary spending for a variety of programs including key to District 23:

- **$226 million for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas** to coordinate drug control efforts among local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies, providing agencies with coordination, equipment, technology, and additional resources to combat drug trafficking and its harmful consequences in critical regions of the United States

- **$582 million Small Business Administration** including:
    o **$80 million for Small Business 7(a) Loans** to help small businesses to start-up and grow
    o **$100 million in Small Business Development Center Grants**, highest ever funding for this program
    o **$17 million Micro-loan program** for very small loans to start-up, newly established, or growing small business concerns

- **$100 million in Community Development Financial Institutions Fund** to support economic development and financial services in disadvantaged and rural communities through housing loans, micro-business loans, community development banks and credit unions, and other efforts aimed at economic development and the expansion of low-cost financial services. On average, each dollar invested in the CDFI Fund leverages an additional $27 in non-Federal funds.

Other key programs in the FY 2008 Financial Services Appropriations bill:

- **$7.3 billion to help close the tax gap** through enforcement, modernization of business systems, and research the best way to increase overall tax compliance

- **$56.5 million for the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence**
   **$83.3 million for the Financial Crimes Enforcement** Network (FinCEN) for more analysts to detect terrorist financing and other criminal behavior.

- **$300 million to implement the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** for grants to help states upgrading voting machines and voter registration databases, was not funded in the 2007 or in the President's request

- **$90 million for Drug-free Communities Grants** to support over 700 drug-free community coalitions across the United States, funding efforts to identify and respond to local substance abuse problems

The Financial Services Appropriations bill must still be approved by the Senate and a Conference Committee before it is sent to the President for his signature.

Congressman Rodriguez is a Member of the House Appropriations Committee.